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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000887

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [UK](#) [EUN](#) [ITALIAN](#) [POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: BLAIR REASSURES BERLUSCONI: "NO DIRECTORATE"

REF: A) ROME-EUR/WE COMMUNIQUE EMAIL 3-5 B) LONDON

SIPRNET 3-5

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

1. (C) UK DEPUTY HEAD OF MISSION SCOTT WIGHTMAN TOLD POLMIN THAT WHILE REF REPORTS ON PM BERLUSCONI'S MARCH 4 LUNCH WITH PM BLAIR IN ROME ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AN AMICABLE ENCOUNTER, BERLUSCONI DID VENT HIS ANGER AT BLAIR OVER THE FRENCH-GERMAN-BRITISH "TRILATERAL" INITIATIVE TO STEER EU POLICY. BLAIR REASSURED BERLUSCONI, AND REITERATED PUBLICLY, THAT THE THREE HAD NO PLANS TO CREATE A "DIRECTORATE" FOR DECISION MAKING TO THE EXCLUSION OF OTHER MEMBER STATES. BLAIR SAID THAT CONSULTATIONS AMONG GROUPS OF MEMBER STATES WERE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, AND UNDERLINED TO BERLUSCONI THAT ITALY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE A CLOSE AND VALUED PARTNER FOR THE UK.

2. (C) WIGHTMAN SAID THAT THE "TRILATERAL" MEETINGS WOULD LIKELY CONTINUE, AND DID NOT INDICATE THAT BERLUSCONI HAD ASKED BLAIR TO CEASE OR INCLUDE ITALY IN THE GROUP. THE UK'S PARTICIPATION HELPS KEEP THE FRENCH AND GERMANS FROM GOING OFF IN UNHELPFUL DIRECTIONS, CONTINUED WIGHTMAN, AND INDEED IS GOOD FOR ITALY AND OTHER MEMBER STATES. IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THE MEETINGS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY LESS CEREMONY AND PAGEANTRY, BUT WIGHTMAN HAD NO SUGGESTIONS FOR CURBING FRENCH PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TENDENCY TO TURN THEM INTO PHOTO-OPPORTUNITIES.
SEMBLER

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